

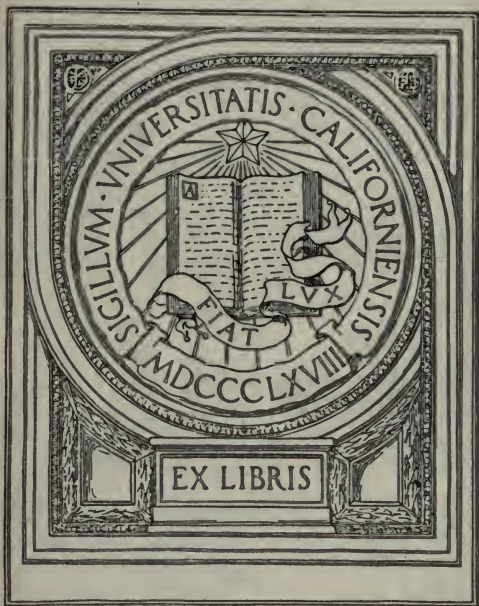
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Parliamentary Reform.

S P E E C H

OF

SIR ROBERT HARRY INGLIS, BART.

17 DECEMBER, 1831.

Parliamentary Reform. u

SUBSTANCE

OF

T H E S P E E C H

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON SATURDAY, THE 17th DECEMBER, 1831.

BY

SIR ROBERT HARRY INGLIS, BART.

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ON THE
MOTION FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN THE REFORM BILL,
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A SPEECH
ON THE
MOTION OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL
FOR A
REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION.

SATURDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 1831.

On the Motion of LORD JOHN RUSSELL, the Order of the Day for resuming the ADJOURNED DEBATE on the Reform of Parliament (England) Bill having been read ; and the question having been put :

SIR ROBERT HARRY INGLIS said :

THE noble Lord opposite (the Chancellor of the Exchequer,) in rising to notice—I will not say to answer, because it was unanswerable—the almost unrivalled speech of my right honourable friend the member for Aldeburgh (Mr. Croker), last night stated, that if it had not been for the two closing words of that speech, he might have conceived that it referred to any other subject than that of the Reform Bill. It is true that the details of that Bill did not occupy any considerable portion of my right honourable friend's speech : it is true that in opposing the principles of that Bill, he

drew his arguments and his illustrations as well from events now passing in other countries as from our own history in other ages ; and I can, therefore, well understand why the honourable gentlemen, the disciples of that individual, who told us, qualify the phrase as you will, that history was an old almanac, in other words, that we were not to apply the events of other times to the present, may be reluctant to hear some of those statements which came last night from the lips of my right honourable friend in reference to transactions two centuries ago, as well as to those contemporary warnings to which he so well called our present attention. I contend, that although my right honourable friend did not, on this occasion, as during the course of the last session, lay open with so strong a hand, cut with so fine a knife, all the contents of the Bill now before us, that, although he did not follow my honourable and learned friend the member for St. Mawes (Sir Edward Sugden), in his acute and penetrating dissection of the Bill in its minuter details, yet he did sufficiently shew that in its essential and characteristic principles, it was unworthy the adoption of the House.

The noble Lord stated, in reference to an observation made on a former occasion by my honourable friend the member for Westminster, that by his new constitution the same men would indeed be returned, as are now sent here by the old system.

SIR JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE.—With different motives.

SIR ROBERT HARRY INGLIS.—It may be so,—I thank my honourable friend for his correction. My honourable and learned friend, who is now entering the House, may, for instance, be returned with these different motives, for did he not tell us the other night, that certain influences now existed which induced him not to press his views with respect to the ballot? But, as my honourable and learned friend intimates that I misunderstood him, I will not continue the allusion. The noble Lord has said, more than once, that the same men, or the same class of men, would be returned; but be this as it may, I well remember his saying that the object and effect of the Reform Bill would be to give to the people “an overpowering influence” in this House; and he last night followed up that sentiment by stating, that the members of the House would be more dependent on the people, their constituents. If this be the case, I contend that all those counteracting influences, which now meet in this House, will be destroyed. The nicely-balanced influences of the three branches of the legislature, which now exist here, will disappear, and this House will become the single organ of an universal democracy. The House of Commons, instead of being the depository of all existing interests and influences in the State,

will become the mere concentrating focus of the will of the people.

Let honourable members consider what must be the consequences of such a state of things in the present artificial condition of society. To take one instance : one-third of the existing property of the country has been created by the will of Parliament, and may be destroyed by the will of Parliament. The whole funded debt of England arose in the first instance from votes of this House : and the credit thus established may be endangered,—I will not say, extinguished—by another vote. Let honourable members, I say, consider that 800,000,000*l.* of property now existing may be entirely destroyed, or greatly deteriorated in value, by a resolution of the new constituency and the new delegates of England, by the acts of those who may have no other object in view than to liberate themselves from the pressure of a debt contracted by a body, which, for the first time in the history of England, the very Government have taught the people to consider as not their representatives, and therefore not fit to bind them. I cannot but look, indeed, with extreme apprehension to the injury which will accrue to other interests of higher importance even than those of the holders of funded property : but I look, in the first instance, to a general deterioration of all property arising from the immediate action, upon this

House, of those who have only the interest of relieving themselves from taxes.

The noble Lord stated twice, in the course of his speech, that every body now admitted the necessity of Reform. Now, even if I were disposed to admit to him, which I am not, that Reform is inevitable, I will never admit that it is needful. I contend that it was not called for either by the wants or by the wishes of the people; and that the attempt to introduce a measure of this kind has been productive hitherto of nothing but injury to the interests of the country.

The noble Lord at the head of the Home Department, in the first line of his letter addressed to the organ of the Government¹, stated that the Government was prepared to introduce a Bill "founded upon a new basis." Now, in the interpretation of this word, and in its application to the Bill before us, I am much more disposed to agree with my right honourable friend the member for Aldeburgh, than with my honourable and learned friend the member for St. Mawes; and I fear that we cannot claim the support of any of the gentlemen opposite, on the ground that the present measure is no longer

¹ Letter from the Viscount Melbourne to Lieutenant Drummond, R. E. 24th November, 1831.—"The Government having determined to found the Reform Bill on a new basis."—House of Commons Paper, No. 17; ordered to be printed 15th December, 1831.

that to which they swore allegiance. In one sense this Bill rests, indeed, upon a new basis ; but in all its substantial parts it is the same measure as the last. Upon the whole, I think that even the machinery of the Bill is worse than it was before ; but supposing that there are here and there some few slight technical improvements, it is still essentially the same as that which has been already rejected by the other House of Parliament. What important part of the last Bill is there not in this ? Have we not now, as then, disfranchisement without proof of guilt—enfranchisement without proof of need—and the same universal uniform constituency, democratical enough, not only to destroy any monarchy, but almost any republic ? The measure has been converted from a Bill of twenty pages into one of forty-eight or fifty pages : its size is altered, its dress is altered, its coat has been fitted to its growth, but its personal identity remains unchanged. What it was at the beginning, on the first day of last March, it is now ; and I fear that there is little hope of our ever altering it to any practical good in this House. I trust, however, if it should eventually pass this House, that Those to whom reference has been so often made, will, as I believe they will, act on the same principles on which they made their stand before : and notwithstanding all that has been said by the noble Lord, I think that the most satisfactory settlement of the Bill will be its rejection.

From the beginning I protested against the principles of this Bill. When the noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, first introduced it, I felt it to be my duty to contend most earnestly against what, for the first time in our history, was enunciated in the House of Commons, as a right principle of legislation — confiscation without conviction—punishment without trial—destruction without compensation. At that time, I most solemnly entered my protest against those principles ; and I now renew that protest, feeling that there is nothing now, as there was nothing then, to justify our acting upon them. My recollection may be imperfect ; and, in that case, I shall feel happy to be corrected ; but I think, that from the 1st of March, when the noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, introduced a similar Bill, no member of His Majesty's Government has opened to us any thing of a general and statesman-like view,—first, of the necessity of these alterations, and, secondly, of the effects which will follow their adoption. If any honourable Gentleman will assist my memory by telling me that, in any one of the discussions which we have had during the last nine months, either any of his Majesty's Ministers, or any of the auxiliary supporters, by whom they are surrounded, have done so, I shall be obliged to him ; but I must confess that no such fact comes to my recollection, even with the assistance of those ordinary sources for refreshing the

memory, open to us all. The Bill is thrown on the table of the House, with a popular statement of the anomalies of the existing system, and of the corruptions which prevail under it; but without any proof, or even any statement of the particular evils which the nation, as such, has thereby sustained; without any evidence that the general effect and tendencies of the old constitution have, on the whole, been practically injurious to the country; without any presumption that the remedy proposed will extirpate the alleged evils, or be unaccompanied by greater evils of its own.

Though I complain that the Bill has, by its authors, been left without any large and statesman-like defence of its principles and its probable effects, I do not mean that it has been trusted alone to its own intrinsic merits, without any defence at all on the part of its noble parents. But while I contend, as I do, that the present Bill is, in all its essential points, the same as that which was rejected elsewhere, I cannot help feeling that the ground upon which the present Bill is now defended, is materially different from that which was taken up in support of the last. When the noble Lord (the Paymaster of the Forces,) first introduced his measure of Reform to this House, he stated, as a noble Lord did elsewhere, that his object was "restoration." On the second occasion upon which the noble Lord presented himself to us—I mean on the 24th of June—he had discovered that Lord Somers was

a reformer, “a friend to innovation,”—that it was not necessary any longer to talk of restoration, and that our Constitution consisted of a series of changes. But now, on his third appeal to us, the noble Lord returns to his first statement, that the Bill will “restore to the people their just rights, which can no longer be withheld.” Now I contend, that a thing to be restored, must have been previously enjoyed, and taken away: but the noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, has not shewn us that the people ever before enjoyed what he proposes to bestow upon them. Having entered fully, on a former occasion, into this part of the subject, I will only repeat now, that from the very beginning of Parliaments, there were boroughs as small as any which now exist; in proof of which I have before quoted the 23d of Edward I. as the date of the one and same year in which precepts were first issued to Old and to New Sarum: it being perfectly clear, that the one was a decayed city, if the other were any thing more than a rising village; and that the population of the one was removed to the other, both not being great towns at any one period together. Away, then, with the doctrine, that the annihilation of these small boroughs is the restoration of the parliamentary constitution of England.

Then, as to the doctrine that the people have an inherent right to be represented, the honourable Baronet, the senior member for Westmin-

ster, if I may be so allowed to distinguish the honourable Baronet whom I mean, stated on a former occasion that the people had the same right to be represented in this House, as the Peers had to sit in their House, or as the King had to sit upon his Throne. My right honourable Friend, the member for Tamworth (Sir Robert Peel), answered that assertion so triumphantly, that I suspect the honourable Baronet (Sir F. Burdett) will not be very eager to sustain it by argument either here or elsewhere. On the principle advanced by the honourable Baronet, the honourable member for Preston, (Mr. Hunt), would be entitled to claim his support in favour of universal suffrage, or even of an equal division of property. Not that I mean to impute such an idea as this last to the honourable member for Preston; but the arguments of the honourable member for Westminster, as to natural rights, if worth any thing, are at least as good in favour of such objects, as they are in favour of those which he more immediately contemplates, unless, indeed, he be a disciple of Dogberry, and think that as reading and writing come by nature, so does a 10*l.* qualification. For my own part, however, I cannot see what ground of distinction an advocate of *natural rights* can take between a man inhabiting a house worth 10*l.* a year, and another inhabiting one worth only 9*l.*

I have already noticed that the noble Lord,

the Paymaster of the Forces (Lord J. Russell), on a former occasion, alluded to Lord Somers as to an innovator ; but if he can overcome that, which is not an unreasonable repugnance in one of his noble house, so far as to refer to BURKE—to his magnificent defence of Lord Somers, he will find that the claim of Lord Somers to the gratitude of posterity rests upon the zeal with which he endeavoured to maintain all the existing institutions of the country. Lord Somers was not an innovator. He and the other great men of the revolution, whose real successors the old Tory party now are, stood up for the integrity of the principles of our institutions. Sir, I say that the old Tory party are the representatives and successors of the great men of the Revolution ; for I am not aware of any doctrines held by them which are not now held by the Tories ; whilst instances can be quoted of men who, inheriting their blood and honours, have violated every principle, for the sake of which those, their illustrious ancestors, would have sacrificed every thing. I speak not of free-trade, I speak not of such comparative trifles, but of things for which those great men were ready to shed their heart's blood, and which some of their descendants would now think it disgraceful to advocate.

My right honourable friend the member for Knaresborough (Sir James Mackintosh), supported the Bill on the ground that the people were thoroughly disgusted with the state of the

representation. I do not know whether the language which I put into his mouth be stronger than he actually used ; but I know that it was to the effect that for seventy years, the people had seen so much bribery going on, that they had lost all confidence in a system under which such practices could prevail. Now, admitting the fact, which I do not, but admitting it for the sake of argument, I ask whether it will be contended by my right honourable friend, that the Bill before us presents any adequate remedy for that evil. We have heard from the noble Lord, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and from my honourable and learned friend the member for Calne (Mr. Macaulay), that the expense of a contested county election under the new system, will be scarcely more than the market price of Old Sarum. I know not what the noble Lord may count the market price of Old Sarum, but I have every reason to believe that it never has been sold. But be that as it may, I do not think that it affects the argument of my right honourable friend, the member for Aldeburgh, last night, against a part of this Bill, when he stated that the expense of fifteen polling booths in different places in one county would render the expense of an election as great under the new as under the old system, if not greater. But this is a matter upon which it is unnecessary to trouble the House with an observation, because the Bill involves interests of such immeasurably higher

importance, that the mere pounds, shillings, and pence view of one fraction of the question is hardly, in the present stage of the proceeding, worth consideration. At the same time, there is one point connected even with the pecuniary part of the question, not altogether undeserving of notice. It is this—you have taken property as the test of qualification in an elector, and in a candidate ; but with respect to candidates, the qualification is so often evaded, that the production of it is almost a mockery. Now, it is most desirable that those who are to sit in this House as, in any sense, the representatives of the people of England, should at least give some evidence that they themselves have a stake in the country, and that they are not mere adventurers, who by popular talents only, without the evidence of personal fortune, can come into a situation to dispose of the fortunes of others. I can see, therefore, even in the expense now incident to popular elections, some check to the otherwise unlimited introduction of pennyless profligate men into these seats of power, into this representation of all the interests of the people of England.

I use the expression “representative ;” but I never will admit that, in the government sense of that word, this House was ever intended to be a strict representation of the people. At the beginning, as, on a former occasion, I was enabled, by the indulgence of the House, to state fully,

the King selected certain communities to send here those who might advise with him. My right honourable friend opposite, the member for Knaresborough, (Sir James Mackintosh), knows well that such was the principle on which all writs were originally issued. I do not deny the full legislative powers, even in the earliest day, of the House of Commons, when once assembled, however assembled; but I deny that it was ever assembled, at any time, as a representation of the people, taken on any one general principle, of wealth, of numbers, or of classes, or of all combined. If, then, there be no right, no abstract right, in the people to representation at all, and still less, to exclusive representation in this House, the question, whether this or that portion of the people have more or less representatives in this House than it ought to have, (all sent alike in obedience to the King's writs, which writs were, in their origin, discretionary), cannot rest on the ground on which it is placed by right honourable gentlemen opposite. The denial or the granting of the franchise—that is, the being called upon, according to the old form, to send persons to advise with the King,—cannot be a matter of complaint on the one hand, or of inherent right on the other. What we have to decide is this,—whether the system so established have, or have not, worked well,—whether its effects have, or have not, been beneficial. Will those who bring forward this measure condescend to point out

the evils which we have endured, and above all, how their proposal is likely to remedy those evils? I do not mean, (for I can see by the Bill,) how the towns of the kingdom are put into schedules, and the people into classes, but I mean a statesmanlike view of the probable effect of this Bill; for if ministers do not make this exposition and sustain it by proof, I, for one, shall contend that they have not discharged their duty, either to the House or to the country, in agitating such an empire as this, with such a question, at this or at any other time.

The noble Lord, (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) stated last night, that we were now all reformers; and the same assertion was made, in the last session, by an honourable Gentleman, whose speech will be more remembered on account of the answer given to it by my right honourable friend, the member for Tamworth, than for any intrinsic merits of its own; that honourable gentleman being pleased to assume, that the only question among us on this side was, what the amount of reform which each might admit, should be. The noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, in like manner told us, in the summer, that now "every anti-reformer has a pigeon-hole for a constitution of his own." Now, I beg leave to say for myself, that I have no constitution to tender to the noble Lord; I am content with the constitution as it exists. I have always contended that the actual frame of our constitution

has produced more blessings to this country than have ever been enjoyed by any other kingdom, in any other age, under any other form of government whatever.

I have heard it asked, indeed,—the question was repeated last night—whether the constitution of England, under the Tudors, be fit to be the constitution of England in the year 1831; and my honourable and learned friend (the member for Calne), stated that, improved as the administration of affairs had been, in the time of Charles I. compared with that of Henry VIII. yet that such improvement had not been so great as the growth of public opinion then required it to be. He did not deny the ameliorations which had, successively, since that time, taken place: he admitted them all; but he argued, that, considerable as they were, they were not commensurate with the requirements of the age. My honourable and learned friend contended, in continuation, that exactly in proportion as the first members of the House of Hanover were unable to act on the principles of the Stuarts, so was the House of Hanover in the nineteenth century unable to act upon the principles of the House of Hanover in the eighteenth century. He argued that none but bigots would contend that the old institutions are fitted to the new condition of the country. Now, I will admit myself as complete a bigot as he could desire to answer, if I cannot prove that the constitution, as it exists now, although in

name the same, is, in point of fact, very different from what it was under the Tudors. Let us take the amount of the elective franchise, for instance, as it was under the Tudors and the Stuarts, and as it is under the House of Hanover. It remains now, and has in every age remained, nominally the same as it was even before the Tudors, in the time of Henry the Sixth; but can any one fail to perceive that, whilst the nominal amount is unaltered, the practical effect is very different? By the change in the value of money, that which was rather a high qualification four centuries ago, has become almost nominal. I hardly know in what proportion, since the time of Henry the Sixth, the constituency has been increased from this cause alone; but, considering, in addition to that cause, the division of property, and the increase of cultivation, it cannot be less than fifty-fold at the lowest. This change has been accomplished gradually without danger, by one of those elastic principles in the constitution, which enable it to accommodate itself to the wants of the times. A change similar to that which has taken place in the constituency, may also be observed in the representatives of the people. Will any one say that the representatives of England are not a very different class of persons from that which sat in this House two centuries ago? It was stated last night, although I dare say it was sufficiently familiar to the House before, that the new member for Worcestershire

was quite unconnected with that county, by birth, or by property, or by residence ; and the honourable Baronet (Sir John S. Sebright), who stated the fact, argued from it, that the county of Worcester was decidedly favourable to Reform, because it preferred a gentleman so circumstanced *with Reform*, to their old member *against Reform*. But does he not see the use which may be made of that fact on the other side of the argument ? Does not the fact itself prove the non-need of Reform, for that the people have, and exercise, under the present system, the power of selecting from all England, those whom they may think most fit to represent them ? That is a power which was given to them by the change of circumstances, and is one which they never could have possessed, and, indeed, did not wish to possess, two centuries ago. Look at Middlesex again : a perfect stranger, in family and in estate, has fallen into the representation of it. Look at Yorkshire. An honourable gentleman, formerly a member of this House, of most respectable private station, five or six years ago, utterly unconnected as he was with the landed aristocracy of that county, and connected only with its manufacturing interests, was, without a *contest*, selected to fill the seat once occupied by Sir George Savile. We all know that last year another honourable and learned person, a stranger in every thing but in reputation, was, by the same county, placed

in the representation of the tenth part of England.

I suppose that it will not be denied, on the ministerial benches, that the House of Commons, elected six months ago, does, by its majority, on their side, at this moment, represent fully the mind and will of the people of England. If this be not so, why taunt us with the cry, that your majorities on this Bill are the organs of the determination of the people, that “the Bill shall pass:”—if it be so, have you not already got a full proof, that, even under the old and reviled system, there are powers inherent in the constitution, by which the strongest infusion of popular excitement can be communicated instantly and irresistibly to this House? While, however, there is this immediate reflection here of the popular feeling on this subject, there are still left amongst us some guards and checks to its extreme violence: and in them there may still be some security for the preservation of other interests. But the noble Lord opposite has not attempted to state that the constituency which he proposes to create, will send representatives who, carrying into this House the mind of the people, will also have any interest in preserving the other institutions of the country.

But it has been stated, that “the people are dissatisfied, and require the change.” Now my honourable and learned friend (the member for Calne) last night stated most happily, in the

course of one of the most splendid speeches which even he ever made in this House, that the Government was made for the people, and not the people for the Government. In that observation I perfectly concur; but I contend, that before we assume the people to be dissatisfied with this Government, we want something far different from the exhibition which has been made to prove it to us. I do not ask upon what grounds, or in what way they are dissatisfied, but I ask the opposite side to prove that such is the fact. Will any man tell me that the current of public opinion has run long and steadily, and, therefore, increasingly, against the old system, and in favour of the new system? Will it be said that the result of the last election conclusively proves it? Let me ask, how can we distinguish between a mountain torrent and a perennial stream? Is it not by watching whether, after a time, there be not a subsidence in its waters? Taking that test, can it be said that the people now hold the same language, and shew the same eagerness respecting the progress of the Bill, that they did six months ago? I will not say whether there have been, in the technical sense of the word, a re-action; but there has certainly been a considerable subsidence of opinion upon this subject.

I am willing to admit, that a Constitution—to work well—must, in all cases, be suited to the people who are to live under it. The English

Constitution was thrown away in Corsica ; and, on the other hand, the absolutism of the Government of Spain and of Portugal is cherished as their heart's blood by the people of the Peninsula. If it be argued that the petitions of the people in this country prove their determination to have this Bill, and nothing but this Bill, I ask the noble Lord opposite, whether he always thought the petitions of the people equally conclusive ; and whether there have not been occasions in which as great numbers of the people have expressed a decided opinion, as they have done in this case ? But I contend that, even if it were proved that the whole existing race of Englishmen were eager and determined to possess this Bill, we should be bound to consider that the people have only a life interest in the Constitution ; that we are their trustees ; that we must not allow them to commit waste on the property, but must ourselves endeavour to preserve it to their and our children. We must not, for the sake of temporary popularity, or even to avoid some great evil, supposing any likely to arise from resistance to this demand, which I deny,—but supposing, I say, that it is likely to arise, we must not, to avoid it, run into the certain evil of sacrificing their permanent welfare and interest.

But, I will ask, does the intelligence of the country demand this change ? I deny that it does. Look to the manner in which the two

Universities have pronounced their opinion. Will the noble Lord deny that a very large proportion of the individuals composing them are opposed to the present measure? I speak now of those, who, by law, constitute the corporate body in both Universities. But can he deny, that at least as large a proportion, also, of the rising talent of the country, now in those Universities, and hereafter to constitute in succession those corporate bodies, will be found, at this instant, arrayed against him and his Bill? I might state the same—I believe, with equal confidence—in respect to the majority both of the clergy and of the magistracy, spread over the whole kingdom.

A minor point, if any thing connected with justice can be considered minor, has not been brought before the House. It is a point which seems to have been totally overlooked by both the noble Lords opposite, in this their sweeping measure, although they were bound to take it into consideration, both by principle and by precedent—I allude to the justice (in abolishing so many existing rights,) of giving adequate compensation to those who are to suffer by their measure. Unpopular as, in this House, may be the doctrine of giving compensation to those whose rights are swept away by Schedule A, can any man deny, particularly after the convincing speech of my Honourable and Learned friend (Sir C. Wetherell) near me, last session, that these boroughs, and the rights belonging to them,

are both, in the strictest sense of the word, property? The Legislature has allowed these burgage-tenures to be bought and sold, all parties knowing that the elective franchise entered into the calculation of their value. After having suffered this, can we turn round and take the property which we have thus allowed to be sold, away from those who have bought it, without giving compensation to them? But, as I said before, this is not merely a question of justice and principle, but of direct precedent. Was not 1,250,000*l.* awarded at the time of the Irish Union to those whose interest in certain boroughs was annihilated by that measure? And is it not recorded by the papers on our own table, that this sum was apportioned, not to the voters, but to the proprietors? Let it not be forgotten, also, that these boroughs so confiscated were, without exception, corporation boroughs, and not boroughs in which the burgage-tenure prevailed, in which last the property evidently becomes more tangible, and of course the argument for compensation more irresistible. I follow the greatest modern lawyers, in holding that *that* is property, the denial of which is the subject of an action. If, therefore, the denial of the right of voting be, as Lord Holt has decided, a subject of action, whether that right rest upon a corporation charter, or upon burgage-tenure, I am justified in contending that some compensation is due to

those whose rights are to be extinguished by the Bill of the noble Lord.

What, after all, Sir, is the end of good government? Throughout these discussions it has been assumed that the end of good government is equality of representation; but I say that this is to confound the end with the means. The civil end of all government ought to be the freedom of the person and the security of the property of the subject. Is not this end attained under the existing system? If so, the noble Lord has no right to derange it for the sake of a theory, whether true or false in the abstract. I consider the *onus* lies with his Majesty's Ministers to prove that the great ends of government have failed; and not only that, but that this measure will attain those ends, that it will satisfy the people, and secure for us blessings which the old system has not secured. Now what does the honourable Member for Preston tell us with regard to the satisfaction of the people? Does he not say that those, whose representative he claims to be in this House, are not satisfied with it? Does not the noble Lord opposite know that certain meetings have taken place in the north, at Macclesfield, Stockport, Leeds, &c., in which, without a single exception, the Whigs have been driven from the field by the disciples of the honourable Member for Preston? Have not the majorities, on those occasions, told us "that they will not be

delivered, bound hand and foot, into the hands of a 10% oligarchy ;” or, to use the expression of my noble friend the Member for Wootton Bassett, (Lord Mahon) last night, to “ an aristocracy of shopkeepers ?”

In any case I should not like the Bill, but certainly it would be more tolerable if any one could state in this House that he believes it to be a final measure ; I mean final as far as the word can be applied to human institutions, meaning, perhaps, a generation. But does the noble Lord pretend to state that the new representation which he proposes to introduce into this House, will not, year after year, bring forward measures which will agitate the country far more than even this ? Does he believe that any thing which we can now do, short of offering actual resistance to this Bill, can prevent the continued agitation of the subject ? Perhaps, indeed, neither granting nor resisting this measure will prevent the question being again agitated. But the difference between the two cases is this : by resisting now, we may effectually prevent the necessity of still further and more dangerous concessions ; whereas, by now yielding, we prepare the way for all future concessions, and give up the very arms with which we might defend ourselves, into the hands of those who will use them to enforce their further demands.

I have already quoted the belief of the noble Lord, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that

much the same members would be elected into a reformed Parliament as are now elected into an unreformed : I might well ask, then, if that be so, why change the system ? But, then, I have also been told, that they will be sent here with different objects. Now in reverting to this subject, which I noticed slightly when I first rose, I cannot but urge the honourable gentlemen opposite, considering, that this point is practically the most important in their Bill—to state at once, what those objects are, and what it is, which will produce a change in the members of a future house in respect to those objects ? If a clear and permanent majority of this House be to be more under the influence of popular will than they are at this moment, can any body doubt what will be the consequences ? Is it not evident, that at the present moment the popular will in some places,—at least, in some meetings—is for the abolition of several institutions, which appear to be as dear to the noble Lord as to myself, and which ought to be far more dear to him than to me ? Does he believe that the interests of property will be as secure, when you have in this House the representatives of those who declare that the law of primogeniture ought to be done away with, and that the distinctions “of rank are unnatural, and” (though the honourable Baronet, the member for Westminster, Sir F. Burdett, did not add the concluding part of the resolution, the other night, I will finish the quotation for

him)—“ought to be abolished.” Do the noble Lords think that the rights of their “order” will be more secure, when members are introduced into this House such as you may expect to be the representatives of a constituency holding opinions like these? Do they not know, that the ultimate objects of those who agitate this question on the other side of these walls, are the remission of all taxes, the confiscation of Church and funded property, and the abolition of the House of Peers? Have not the latter body, as was stated by my right honourable friend, the member for Aldeburgh, yesterday, been designated as an assembly of 199 individuals, and their corporate capacity, and their legislative functions destroyed, so far as the will of those who hold that doctrine is concerned?

Under these circumstances, I can feel no confidence in the stability, even, of the constitution about to be established; and so far as all the great existing interests of the country are concerned, I see no new security to any one, and I see danger gathering round almost all. I see danger, indeed, on every side. I admit to the noble Lord, that there is danger in resistance; but I contend that the danger of concession is infinitely greater. I believe that, under the existing system, greater happiness has been enjoyed by the people of this country, than ever was bestowed upon any people in any age, or in any country. Admitting, and feeling, I hope, greatly for the existence of

much individual distress, and distress even in large masses,—I say that such civilization, such wealth, such comfort, such freedom, such widespread enjoyment, never before, I believe, was known in any country of the world. Our national wealth and resources, exhausted as they now appear to many to be, under the pressure of tremendous wars, and an expenditure of above 1,000,000,000*l.*, in the course of thirty years, are yet greater, I believe, than those of any five other European states. No man who has travelled will venture to say that there is any country of Europe bearing evidences of such an extension of civilization and comfort as have been possessed by England under our despised and reviled constitution. Looking to the history of the last thirty years, there is no shore which is not tributary to our commerce ; there is no sea which has not been a witness of our victories ; our sword has not been drawn except to conquer,—has not been sheathed except to spare ; and in all things among all the nations of the earth, Providence has pre-eminently prospered us. What have we rendered to God for these His blessings ? What we have been as individuals, I will not say. I desire to judge no man except myself : and this is a subject too delicate to justify more than the most passing allusion :—but, as a nation, we have not employed our wealth, our resources, and our influence, as we ought ; we have not been suffi-

ciently humble,—we have not been sufficiently thankful for the blessings which we have enjoyed. I most conscientiously and solemnly believe, that if this Bill of Reform shall pass, carrying with it the hazard, and, at no very distant day, the destruction of all that security of social comforts which we have hitherto enjoyed, the overthrow of all our institutions, and the unspeakable and immeasurable misery which must attend and follow that crisis ;—I say, I most conscientiously and solemnly believe it will be, because we have been at once the most favoured and the most ungrateful of nations.

THE END.

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